

## Motor Vehicle News



The Department of Motor Vehicles has adopted a new emissions testing system in which vehicles must be tested every other year. Exemptions pertain to vehicles that are four or less model years old. A notification with your test date will be sent through the mail. You may also access your test date online at [www.ctemissions.com](http://www.ctemissions.com) by entering your vehicle identification number (VIN), or by calling the **Emissions Test Hotline at 1-888-828-8399**. The cost for the test is \$20. Appointments for an inspection can be made with any of the 300 Official Emissions Test Stations in Connecticut. The emissions test sites in the Northwest Corner are:

**Litchfield Hills Motorsports**  
59 Torrington Rd.  
Goshen

**Northwest Hills Chrysler Jeep**  
2033 East Main St.  
Torrington

**Bahr Auto Repair**  
1065 South Main St.  
Torrington

**Wilson Dodge Nissan**  
1530 East Main St.  
Torrington

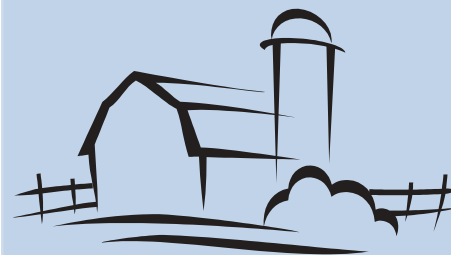
## Graduated Drivers' Licenses

*Young drivers need more experience and less distractions.*

The rate of fatal accidents caused by 16 and 17 year old drivers nearly doubles when they carry three or more passengers. A new graduated driver's license law will require young drivers to "graduate" from a learner's permit to a six-month provisional license. For the first three months they may have only one passenger such as a parent, guardian, or instructor. For the second three months, they may only transport immediate family members. (PA 03-171, effective Oct. 1, 2003)

## 64<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

*Cornwall  
Goshen  
Salisbury  
Sharon  
Torrington*



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
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64th District



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STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# ROBERTA WILLIS

Capitol News 2003

## CEMENT PLANT RAISES CONCERNS

*Hazardous air pollutants from the cement plant pose a real, measurable health threat for citizens throughout the Northwest Corner.*

St. Lawrence Cement (SLC) wants to build one of the country's largest coal-fired cement plants **less than 20 miles from the Connecticut border in New York**. Although SLC has promised to utilize newer and cleaner technologies in cement production, the scale of the proposed massive industrial complex at 1,700 acres is overwhelming. Connecticut will not benefit economically from the product being produced. The company has indicated the cement will not be sold in our state and we will not reap benefits from jobs or taxes. **But we will risk our health.** The plant will emit **20 million pounds of hazardous pollutants and particulate matter into our air**. The air emissions this facility would produce are known to cause a wide range of cancers, asthma, various respiratory problems, cardiovascular ailments, and sometimes death. The company has refused to sign a deed restriction that would prohibit burning hazardous waste at the plant. Connecticut residents have joined thirteen local, regional and national environmental, historic preservation, and business groups to oppose the SLC plant. I have been monitoring the progress of this development along with our Attorney General Richard Blumenthal and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.



## COURTHOUSE UPDATE

Litchfield County needs a new courthouse and the **City of Torrington offers the best possible sites**. I have been working to bring the courthouse to Torrington, but in order for this to happen, an existing statute needs to be changed for it to be considered. Governor Rowland has declared this change will occur in February when the bond package will be voted upon. The construction of a new courthouse in Torrington will help boost the city's economy and best meet the needs of the entire region.

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## Education and Environment

### Providing a Healthy Learning Environment

*Parents expect school to be a place where children learn in a safe and healthy environment.*

In response to reports of "sick" school buildings where students and faculty have developed chronic respiratory ailments, the legislature approved an **Indoor Air Quality Bill** after three years of consideration. The new law will require schools to conduct appropriate environmental assessments, proper maintenance of heating, cooling and ventilation systems, and implement a testing and evaluation program. In addition, teams of parents, teachers and administration members will work together to keep schools clean and investigate problems when they arise. If we expect high performance schools, first, we need healthy students and teachers. (PA 03-220, effective July 1, 2003)

### Improving the Quality of Air We Breathe

*It is a proven fact that our exposure to secondhand smoke increases the risk of serious health problems.*

A new law imposes a **statewide ban on smoking** in workplaces and public buildings. The ban applies to smoking inside restaurants and other establishments with liquor permits and anywhere in state and municipal buildings, health care institutions and private college and university dorms. It limits smoking in places where five or more people work to specially ventilated smoking rooms. The ban went into effect on October 1, 2003, but the ban on smoking in taverns, cafes, and bowling alley bars will be April 1, 2003. (PA 03-45)



*A local pond choked by invasive plants.  
Photo courtesy of Betsy Glassman.*

### Preserving Our Natural Resources

*It is not widely known the second biggest threat to our state natural habitats is the invasion of non-native plants and animal species.*

Many invasive plants were introduced deliberately by humans to beautify the landscape, but have instead turned into ecological disasters. Invasive plants crowd out native species, **threatening bio-diversity, habitat quality, and ecosystem function**. Our lakes and streams have also been affected, deterring fishing, boating and swimming. An Invasive Plants Council will educate the public, merchants, and consumers about the problem and recommend ways to control the spread of invasives by identifying them. Six aquatic plants have already been banned

under the legislation. Hopefully, this will help manage and control the spread of invasive plants in our forests and waterways. (PA 03-136)



*Rep. Willis presenting an award to students for implementing a new environmental program that will help make their school "greener."*

## Public Health and Safety

### Supporting Healthy Families

*Families shouldn't have to choose between keeping a job and caring for a family member.*

An amendment to the **Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**, allows private-sector employees to use up to two weeks of accumulated sick time while on family leave. Employees may use FMLA to attend to the serious health condition of a child, spouse, or parent, or for the birth or adoption of a child. It prohibits employers from firing or discriminating against an employee for using sick time for FMLA purposes. (PA 03-213, effective Oct. 1, 2003)



### Expanding Health Insurance

- ◆ **Medical Savings Accounts (MSAs)** are available in Connecticut. MSAs are tax-exempt accounts, similar to an Individual Retirement Account (IRA). They are intended to pay for most routine medical expenses and may only be created with a high deductible health plan, which provides protection against the huge expenses of serious illness or injury. (PA 03-78, effective July 1, 2003)
- ◆ Small employers (businesses with 50 employees or less) and non-profit corporations will be eligible to **purchase group insurance through the creation of a new statewide insurance pool**. This will help small businesses lower their costs, while increasing the number of insured. For more information or assistance in applying for coverage, call the Comptroller's office at 1-800-572-7891. (PA 03-149)

### Making Our Communities Safer

*Research indicates that DNA databases help solve violent crimes.*

Legislation was passed to allow law enforcement agencies to collect DNA samples from a person convicted of a felony or misdemeanor. This will help solve crimes and also **protect the innocent** from being wrongly convicted. (PA 03-242, effective Oct. 1, 2003)

## Our New State Fish!



The American Shad, which is the largest of the herrings and inhabitants of our local rivers, is Connecticut's new State Fish. The Connecticut River has an estimated 1-2 million adult shad that return to our waters each year. George Washington's troops at Valley Forge were saved from near starvation by being fed Shad meat. The historical and current importance of the shad to Connecticut's economy helped to name the Shad as the state fish (PA 03-41, effective Oct. 1, 2003).



*Rep. Willis at an event to celebrate Audubon Connecticut's release of "Protecting Connecticut's Grassland Heritage." Also pictured is Wendy Rineer of the Audubon Center in Sharon (with Mandy, a Red Tailed Hawk and Sharon native) and Audubon Connecticut's Executive Director Thomas R. Baptist.*



**Questions ~ Concerns? Call State Representative Roberta Willis at 1-800-842-8267.**